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YI, UNO, IR, LE

SUBJECT: THE PRESIDENT'S JUNE 6 MEETING WITH FRENCH  
PRESIDENT SARKOZY

REF: A. PARIS 1844

[¶](#)B. PARIS 1871

Classified By: CDA Thomas J. White for reasons 1.4 (B & D).

¶1. (C) The meeting between the President and French President Nicolas Sarkozy in Heiligendamm June 6 will be their first official encounter since then-Interior Minister Sarkozy met briefly with the President on September 12, 2006. The two presidents will meet on the same day that Defense Secretary Gates and new French Defense Minister Herve Morin

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commemorate D-Day on the beaches of Normandy. France's new President -- who has promised France's citizens that he will say what he will do and do what he has said -- has declared that improving France's relationship with the United States is one of his top priorities. We should take him at his word and seek to exploit this opening to reinvigorate our strategic relationship with France, since close cooperation with France -- bilaterally, within NATO, at the UNSC, and through the EU -- is a key force multiplier.

¶2. (C) That said, we will need to take into account the fact that Sarkozy was elected President primarily with a mandate for domestic reform. He will devote his first weeks and months in office to delivering on his promises and implementing that mandate. Even if Sarkozy handily wins the June legislative elections, as currently expected, he will face vigorous opposition from those with entrenched interests, including unions and the coalition of students and their parents who fear a loss of France's vaunted social protections. In the foreign policy arena, as was made clear in his May 16 meeting with German Chancellor Merkel on the same day he assumed office, Sarkozy will focus in the short term on the run-up to the June 21-22 EU Council meeting as a means of finally re-imparting institutional momentum following the French and Dutch rejection of the EU constitutional treaty.

¶3. (C) The President will want to welcome Sarkozy's election and the possibilities it represents for reforming and re-energizing France and Europe, while acknowledging the challenges that Sarkozy faces in the years ahead. Sarkozy greatly enjoys political strategizing (the basis of his close relationship with UK PM Blair), and can be expected to talk at some length about his strategy of moving toward the center, winning the upcoming legislative elections, and pushing through an ambitious reform program in his first months of office.

¶ 4. (C) The President should also welcome Sarkozy's commitment to a U.S.-French relationship based on mutual confidence and candor, and will want to address Sarkozy's desire for frequent contact on the full range of issues. We should suggest that NSA Hadley would hope to have the same kind of close relationship with Sarkozy's diplomatic advisor, Jean-David Levitte, and seek Sarkozy's agreement that they be mandated to begin a quiet dialogue on how we might reinvigorate the U.S.-French strategic relationship, including through a larger and more positive French leadership role within NATO. The President can assure Sarkozy that this would not be at the expense of the EU -- we do not see this as zero-sum -- but that we are striving for a win-win outcome for both organizations.

¶ 5. (C) We believe it is essential for the President to raise two issues in this initial meeting, Afghanistan and Iraq. On Afghanistan, France has been sending mixed signals. MFA Political Director Araud has counseled us to try early on to move Sarkozy away from Chirac's pessimistic view of Afghanistan, and lay the basis for a more activist, multifaceted French effort there. Unfortunately, in responding to the Taliban hostage-taking of a French NGO worker, Sarkozy suggested that a long-term French presence would not be "decisive," implying that he would consider reducing France's commitments. Although we have since been assured by Levitte that French policy has not changed, we believe it is essential to obtain that commitment from Sarkozy himself. NATO/ISAF requires France's continuing engagement; as with Bosnia or Kosovo, when it comes to the Alliance it must remain "in together and out together."

¶ 6. (C) On Iraq, Sarkozy recognizes that an American defeat is also a defeat for Europe, and he told the President that he would "help get the U.S. out of Iraq." We take for granted that, at a minimum, this means that the needling

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rhetoric of the past will be dropped, including repeated calls to offer a "horizon" for an eventual troop withdrawal. Beyond that, it is extremely unlikely that France would put troops on the ground, but the President should seek a new level of engagement that could be demonstrated, for example, by visibly working with Arab governments in support of a political settlement in Iraq. France could also raise the level of its representation at, and support for, the regional conferences with Iraq's neighbors now underway.

¶ 7. (C) Sarkozy is likely to have two priority issues of his own to raise, climate change and Darfur. On the first, Sarkozy signaled during his election victory speech that climate change was his top priority, and he called on the U.S. to "take the lead" in the fight against global warming. Sarkozy has stopped short of calling on the U.S. to join Kyoto, but he publicly advocates the idea of a carbon tax on imports from non-Kyoto signatories as a means of defending Europe's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions trading system (ETS). The President should express our interest in enhancing collaboration on climate change with France, with a view to greater cooperation on a positive science and technology agenda.

¶ 8. (C) Darfur is likely to be a high-profile issue for Sarkozy and his Foreign Minister, former UN Kosovo Czar, NGO (Doctors Without Borders) activist, and human rights interventionist Bernard Kouchner, which would permit the Sarkozy government to put more of a human rights stamp on its foreign policy. (Sarkozy has himself called for greater human rights emphasis in French foreign policy: he has been sharply critical of Russia on Chechnya, and opposes the lifting of the EU arms embargo on China, on human rights grounds.) The President should assure Sarkozy of our desire to work closely with Sarkozy on Darfur, with the aim of reproducing the kind of success we have had together on Lebanon.

¶9. (C) As time permits, we would recommend that the President touch on the need to maintain continuity on U.S.-French cooperation on Lebanon/Syria and Iran, including the need to ratchet up sanctions and reinforce them outside the UN framework if necessary. The President should also stress the importance of maintaining Western unity on Kosovo in the face of Russian opposition. This might offer a chance for a brief exchange on Russia more generally, including on missile defense, and lead to a brief assessment by Sarkozy's assessment of EU-Russia relations. (Sarkozy has a much more critical view of Russia than did Chirac.)

¶10. (C) Finally, Sarkozy's opposition to Turkish entry into the EU is public and likely unshakeable: it is one of his few defining foreign policy issues. He has heard our strategic rationale for bringing Turkey into the EU, but has made clear that whatever the ramifications of keeping Turkey out, he opposes bringing 70 million Muslims into Europe, further diluting its identity and exacerbating France's own sensitive immigration issue (although he puts his argument in terms of "Turkey is in Asia Minor, not Europe.") The President, while noting that this is an issue that only the EU can decide, should nonetheless seek to persuade Sarkozy to avoid any early or dramatic closing of the door; not taking a decision at this time would allow the accession negotiations so indispensable to Turkey's own internal reforms to proceed uninterrupted.

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